

Mirfield Urban District Council.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year
1895.

To the Mirfield Urban District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1895.

GENTLEMEN,

Once again I have the honour to present you with my Annual Report.

It cannot be said to be a pleasing duty, though a necessary one, to draw your attention from time to time to sanitary defects which require remedying, very often entailing expense not only to the Council, but also to property owners, both of whom however I find very willing to carry out my suggestions.

Population.

I estimate the population at 11 942 to the end of June, 1895, an increase of 50, this being the excess of births over deaths. I have not taken into consideration the exclusion of part of the district at Shepley Bridge, as I think that has been more than made up by the temporary addition of men who are lodging in Mirfield while employed in making the line between Heaton Junction and Wortley.

Empty Houses.

The number of empty houses is almost nil. We had 201 unoccupied this time last year.

Births.

During the year 262 births have been registered, 111 males, 151 females, the birthrate being 21.93 per 1000, for 1894 it was 21.52. Below you will see how this year compares with the last ten years :—

In 1885	...	300	In 1889	...	270	In 1893	...	308
„ 1886	...	307	„ 1890	...	270	„ 1894	...	256
„ 1887	...	337	„ 1891	...	261	„ 1895	...	262
„ 1888	...	308	„ 1892	...	253			

Deaths.

200 deaths have been registered during the year, 97 males, 103 females, the deathrate for the year being 16.74 per 1000, as against 16.39 for 1894.

Non-residents.

Five of the deaths are of non-residents, all adults. One died at the Memorial Hospital from Ravensthorpe; 2 men were killed in the Railway accident on March 28th; the other 2 died while on a visit. On further enquiry on the other hand I find that 2 deaths have taken place at the Wakefield Asylum during the year; but none at the Union Workhouse, thus reducing the actual number of deaths of Mirfield people to 197 which reduces the deathrate to 16.49.

The following table will show the numbers of deaths since 1888, classified according to ages as desired by the Local Government Board.

Ages of the deaths.

	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Under one year	48	49	42	42	66	43	41	38
1 year and under 5 years	25	44	32	39	15	20	24	26
5 years „ 15 „	15	18	8	15	7	13	10	11
15 „ „ 25 „	11	9	17	13	15	15	21	8
25 „ „ 60 „	60	48	51	78	49	64	61	72
60 years and upwards ...	36	59	67	72	64	47	38	45
Total	196	227	217	259	216	202	195	200

Deaths not certified.

There has only been one uncertified death. Last year there were 2.

Inquests.

20 Inquests have been held during the year on persons who have died suddenly either from disease or violence, e.g. Two were held in Feby :—One died by shooting himself ; another injured his head from falling down stairs. Three were held in March :—One fractured her ribs by falling against a grate, which caused her death ; another probably died from Heart disease ; another was a child 14 months old, death being said to be due to Bronchitis. Three were held in April :—Two were killed in the Railway accident on March 28th ; the other death was probably due to Alcoholism. One was held in June :—This death was said to be due to Heart disease, this was a visitor. Three were held in July :—One death was due to the rupture of a blood vessel ; another to drowning during a violent thunderstorm ; the other to Apoplexy. One was held in August :—This was a child who was burnt, his shirt catching fire. Three were held in October :—one met his death by an accident in a Coal pit ; another by her clothes getting on fire ; the other death was probably due to Heart disease. One was held in November :—This was a case of a man who was blown over a wall in a violent gale of wind. Three were held in December :—One death being that of an infant 4 months old falling on a stone floor ; another was probably due to Heart disease the other probably Acute Pneumonia. The absence of Post-Mortem examinations in some of these cases of sudden deaths, renders the returns as to the actual cause of death problematical and therefore to a certain extent more or less inaccurate.

Infants.

38 infants under one year of age have died during the year. The infant deathrate is 145.0 per 1,000 births registered, and 3.18 per 1,000 deaths. In 1894, 41 infants died from 256 births. This year it is 38 infants from 262 births, thus showing a slight improvement in infantile life and vigour.

Phthisis.

19 deaths have been caused by this disease, as compared with 27 in 1894. I give below the number of deaths from this disease for the last 6 years :—

In 1890	... 25 deaths.	In 1892	... 16 deaths.	In 1894	... 27 deaths.
„ 1891	... 15 „	„ 1893	... 20 „	„ 1895	... 19 „

The average for the last 6 years is 20.2. Though the saving is but slight, still it is on the right side, and even one life spared reduces the phthical death rate from 2.27 in 1894, to 1.68 in 1895. If possible in the future I shall see if further enquiries will not bring out the fact that many of the surroundings of these cases are bad in a hygienic point of view.

Pneumonia, Pleurisy, & Bronchitis.

44 persons have been carried off by these three diseases. It is only by comparing one year with another that we are enabled to find out whether we are advancing or not in the control of this disease.

In 1890	... 46 deaths.	In 1892	... 56 deaths.	In 1894	... 43 deaths.
„ 1891	... 79 „	„ 1893	... 52 „	„ 1895	... 44 „

These diseases are also below the average of the last six years. The Pneumonic deathrate is 3.69 per 1,000 deaths.

Influenza.

This fever seems to recur every spring, and this year 4 deaths have been attributed to it and its complications.

Zymotic.

The deaths due to Zymotic disease during the year are 18, as against 16 for 1894. This is more than in 1894, but 7.9 less than the average for the last 10 years. The Zymotic deathrate is 1.5 per 1,000—not very much to complain of, but we must not rest satisfied until we can wipe out these diseases away altogether.

In the following list you will see which of the Zymotic Diseases have been the most fatal during the last 10 years :—

	84	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	Total
Smallpox ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Scarlet Fever ...	4	6	8	11	7	0	2	1	3	0	1	43
Measles ...	7	2	5	0	22	0	11	0	0	0	10	57
Typhoid Fever ...	3	3	3	2	3	2	4	0	2	0	0	22
Continued Fever ...	.	.	.	.	.	0	3	3	0	0	0	6
Diarrhea ...	0	3	1	1	2	0	2	3	7	4	4	27
Diphtheria ...	0	1	0	1	3	5	6	0	0	3	2	21
Membranous Croup ...	.	.	.	0	1	6	2	1	0	1	1	12
Erysipelas ...	.	.	.	0	2	1	3	3	0	1	0	10
Pyæmia ...	.	.	.	.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Puerperal Fever ...	.	.	.	.	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Whooping Cough ...	14	0	3	4	12	5	3	5	4	6	0	56
Total	28	15	20	19	53	19	37	17	17	16	18	259

I shall again allude to most of these diseases under the head of Infectious Notification, &c.

Drainage.

No great extension of drainage has been done during the year. Your attention is still urgently required at the West End of Battysford :—Bracken Hill, Lower Row, Upper Row, Was Nest, Sunny Bank.

I should like to see some system adopted in which the foul water should get more quickly into the drains and not stop at the sink gullies, for many of them are so many tiny cesspools. Householders can remedy a great deal of it themselves if they will empty a bucketful of clean water into the gully after they have emptied the foul water.

Water.

During the year the Town's Water has been abundant in quantity, It has still acted injuriously on the health of the inhabitants by its soluble action on lead. It has also often been very peaty. The Water should always be filtered before being used. The Huddersfield Corporation are I am very thankful to say beginning to realize their duty, and before very long we shall be having a supply of wholesome water of which any town may well be proud. This desired result would not have been obtained without outside help. The Local Government Board have tried to help us ; also the W.R. County Council ; to both authorities I shall attribute our success to a very great extent. Dr. Cameron helped the work as much as possible, and under Dr. Kaye's guidance it is now being undertaken, which is to be hoped will soon be followed by favourable results.

Infectious Notification Act.

I now come to the question, most especially those forms of sickness which come under the above heading. This Act has now been in force in Mirfield a little more than 5 years. The following table will shew you the number of cases occurring each year, also the number of fatal cases :—

	1891		1892		1893		1894		1895	
	Cases	Deaths.	Cases.	Deaths.	Cases.	Deaths	Cases.	Deaths.	Cases.	Deaths.
Smallpox	0	0	11	1	9	1	0	0	0	0
Scarlet Fever	41	2	23	1	39	3	13	0	32	1
Diphtheria	16	6	5	0	0	0	6	3	8	2
Membranous Croup	3	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
Typhoid Fever	4	4	2	0	3	2	3	0	17	0
Continued Fever	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Puerperal Fever	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Erysipelas	11	3	16	3	4	0	10	0	9	0
Cholera	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	79	20	60	7	55	6	34	5	68	4

Smallpox. No cases during the year.

Scarlet Fever. 32 cases, 1 death. This disease has now for some years been almost a constant visitor, but has never shown much activity until late in the Autumn of 1895. We can never really check its ravages until we are able to isolate the first case.

Diphtheria & Membranous Croup. 9 cases and 3 deaths. I feel sure we should have fewer cases of Diphtheria amongst children if all the Manhole Grates were hermetically sealed in all the streets, especially the side streets where the children play about. Ventilators will have to be erected, carrying the sewer gas above the houses.

{ Typhoid & Continued Fevers. 18 cases with no death. Having received a detailed report of 11 of these cases which occurred at the Calder Farm Reformatory, a copy of which was sent to the Local Government Board, also to the West Riding County Council, it is perhaps scarcely necessary to repeat it here, but I will do so if the Council desire it. The other cases have been sporadic ones.

Puerperal Fever. No cases.

Measles. Here is a disease which unfortunately is not considered of any importance by a great number of people, from the fact that it is considered one that children must have. If Measles were included in the Notification Act, we should be able to stop many an Epidemic by preventing children from infected houses going to school. This disease is very infectious in its very early stages, even before the rash comes out, that is why *apparently* healthy children going to school spread infection to all the others. In the early part of April an Epidemic of Measles began amongst the children attending Eastthorpe Schools, it spread from there to all the other Schools, necessitating the closing of nearly all the Schools of the district, which proceeding had the desired effect of checking its spread. No less than 10 children died from this disease, which clearly demonstrates that it is not always the mild complaint that it is supposed to be.

Whooping Cough. No deaths. A few cases during the year, but at no time Epidemic.

Erysipelas. 9 cases, but no death.

Infectious Hospital.

During the year I am glad to say some advance has been made towards providing a Hospital for Infectious Cases, though it has not made such rapid progress as I had hoped it would, and if its erection could be speedily accomplished, it would, I think, prevent us from going through the same amount of illness as we have been doing lately.

In conclusion I beg to thank all who have so kindly given me such efficient help during the year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

THOS. B. FAIRCLOUGH,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

May 6th, 1896.

